

U.S. San Antonio Arsenal, Magazine
San Antonio Arsenal
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3175-E

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNITED STATES SAN ANTONIO ARSENAL, MAGAZINE

HABS No. TX-3175E

Location: San Antonio Arsenal, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner: United States Government.

Present Occupant: Texas National Guard.

Present Use: Storage.

Significance: This building was the second structure erected at the Arsenal depot in 1860 and was also the second permanent military building erected in Texas by the Federal Government. Architecturally, the building is unique in this state because of the nature of its construction.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1859-60. Construction was finished by the Confederates during the Civil War.
2. Original and subsequent owners: The building has been owned by the Federal Government since its construction, except for a period of Confederate occupation.

B. Historical Context:

Construction of the Arsenal buildings began in 1859 and partly finished at the beginning of the Civil War. In 1861, when the Arsenal surrendered to the Confederates, the Magazine was one of the two uncompleted buildings. Its barrel vault system and roof were yet to be built, but the Confederates finished them. This construction was supervised by Major John H. Jampman, CSA, a San Antonio architect and building contractor.

See also United States San Antonio Arsenal Depot, HABS No. TX-3175.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The magazine is a simple and functional structure still serving in its original capacity.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The rectangular structure measures 30'x 110'-1".

2. Foundations: Coursed ashlar limestone of local origin and lime mortar; plain water table.
3. Walls: Coursed ashlar with twelve-inch-high stones and mortar joints $1/4$ to $3/8$ of an inch wide, finished flush. Individual stones vary in length from about 18 inches to 36 inches. The surfaces of the stone are smooth, the joints are accurately formed, and the color is creamy yellow with occasional small areas of dull orange. The stone is the local limestone, rather soft. Some pieces contain small shells from marine life.

A notable feature of the building are the Gothic skew corbels at the gables. These are finished with a classical cyma molding at the offset angle. The gable is capped by a limestone coping.

Located over the doorway is a carved date plaque with the date "1860", a cannon, a pyramid of cannon balls and a gun-powder barrel. There is another plaque on the north elevation, reading "William Obrndorf Austin 1868."

4. Structural system, framing: The one interior space is enclosed by a masonry barrel vault whose horizontal thrust is resolved by the mass of the walls. There are no tie rods nor buttresses. The floor framing could not be determined: it may be a wooden joist system, or the interior wooden floor may be nailed to sleepers placed over a masonry floor and since the space below the floor is ventilated by means of vent ports. It is most probable that the roof is framed separate from the vault, because there are vent ports high on both gable ends of the building which do not have corresponding openings within. It is likely that the roof is framed in wood, again because of the vent ports.
5. Stoop: Two steps at door, concrete. These appear to be newer than the rest of the building.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There is only one doorway opening and this is located in the center of the west facade. The opening is trabeated and has a plain hood mold.

There is both an exterior and an interior door with a small vestibule between corresponding to the thickness of the walls (54"). The exterior door is wood, metal clad with lapped sheets as in fire door construction. The inner door is also wooden and covered with nailed aluminum.

- b. Windows: One window opening is located in each end wall, with a plain hood mold and a sill. Steel bars cover the openings behind the shutters and on the interior are wood casement sash with 1/4" by 1/4" metal screen wire.
- c. Vent ports: Blind breather spaces are ranged around the facades. These are 6 inches wide by 12 inches high and open onto a hollow cavity space in the walls from which staggered openings give access to the interior. This arrangement allows ventilation of the building with no possibility of an incendiary object making its way to the interior.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Simple gable roof erected over masonry barrel vault, covered with diamond-shaped asbestos shingles, grey-green in color.
- b. Eaves: The gable is finished with skew corbels that turn horizontal and which have carved classical moldings at the angle juncture with the wall.

A carved limestone cornice caps the walls. The molding is a classical cyma reversa with an overhanging drip of rectilinear section.

Simple sheet metal gutters and downspouts drain water at both eaves.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The interior is one oblong space, undivided except for modern wood framed, metal wire cages forming separated storage spaces.
- 2. Flooring: 1"x 6" pine flooring running lengthwise with the building.
- 3. Wall and ceiling finish: Stone walls with visible tooling marks are painted white. Stone courses are 12 inches high. The ceiling is also painted white.
- 4. Hardware: Simple, large iron pintle hinges, hooks and hasps are used.
- 5. Lighting: Modern electric bare bulbs.
- 6. Sprinkler system: Metal pipe hung from vault with metal tension rods.

D. Site:

- 1. General orientation and setting: The Magazine is oriented with its long axis north and south and faces west. It is surrounded by later buildings and the Arsenal streets: Phipps Street on the west, Kress Street on the east and Maclin Road on the south.

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PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The San Antonio project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the summer of 1968, and was made possible with funds from HABS and two sponsors, the Bexar County Historical Survey Committee and the San Antonio Conservation Society. Under the direction of James Massey, chief of HABS, the project was carried out by Wesley I. Shank (Iowa State University), project supervisor, and by student assistant architects, Charles W. Barrow (University of Texas); Les Beilinson (University of Miami); William H. Edwards (University of Illinois); and Larry D. Hermesen (Iowa State University) at the HABS field office in the former Ursuline Convent buildings, San Antonio. John C. Garner, Jr., director of Bexar County Architecture Survey, did the outside work on the written documentaries. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. - office, edited the written data in 1983, for preparation of transmittal to the Library of Congress. Dewey G. Mears of Austin, Texas took the documentary photographs of the San Antonio structures.